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May 18, 1999

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Mr. Lyle D. Jaffe
Dockets Management
FDA/DHHS
12420 Parklawn Drive, Room 1-23
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Mr. Jaffe:

I would like to support the ban on forced molting, docket #98P-0203/CP. The process is inhumane and should not be used to such an extreme.

A natural molt frequently happens to hens at the onset of winter, when nature discourages the hatching of chicks. The hen stops laying eggs and concentrates her energies on staying warm and growing new feathers.

The egg industry artificially manipulates this natural process by forcing an entire flock to molt simultaneously, normally after 10 months of relentless egg production. It is used as an economic tool to renew shell quality in exhausted hens when it is deemed cheaper to "recycle" them rather than immediately slaughter them after 40 or so weeks of constant egg-laying on a calcium-deficient diet.

To force the hens to molt, their food is entirely removed or nutritionally reduced for an average of 10 days. Water removal, drugs and artificial dark-light manipulation may also be used. The hens abruptly shed their feathers and stop laying eggs for one or two months, instead of the normal three or four. The survivors may be force-molted two or three more times, based on economics.

At any given time over six million hens in the United States are being systematically starved in their cages.

The life of an egg-layer is filled with beak and toe mutilation and intense confinement. Forced molting is one more torture that these animals must endure. Please ban this unnatural practice. Your response will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

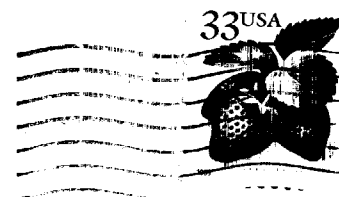
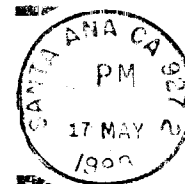

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98P-0203

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